

KANSAS



Introduction and General Description

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Kansas has been driven by two guiding beliefs. The first is recognizing the value of our native plant communities, not only for their biological diversity, but also their sustainability and their productivity. The second has been to build into the Partners Program the flexibility necessary to make it accommodate the needs of both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the private landowner/producer. The Kansas Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has utilized this philosophy to voluntarily

restore, enhance, and develop thousands of acres of highly functional wetland, grassland, and woodland habitats throughout the state. Since 1990, the Partners Program has partnered with over 700 Kansas landowners. The number of new requests for assistance continues to accelerate.

Gail Combs, Kansas farmer and Partners cooperator, says this about the Kansas Partners Program, *"This program does so much good and works so well with me as a an agricultural producer and an environmentalist, that it hardly seems possible that a government program could work this well."*

Kansas Activities:

- * Wetland restoration
- * Wetland creation
- * Prairie restoration
- * Prairie enhancement
- * Riparian restoration
- * Riparian enhancement
- * Bottomland hardwoods
- * Oxbow restoration
- * Environmental education



Federally threatened Meads milkweed.

Habitats of Special Concern

The tallgrass prairie is considered to be North America's most altered biome. Less than 4% of this globally unique grassland remains intact. The State of Kansas harbors 80% of the remaining North American tallgrass prairie.

More than 700 plant species compose this unique plant community. Over 250 bird species, 60 species of mammals, 35 species of reptiles, amphibians, and countless species of insects, all form this rich tapestry of life that we call the tallgrass prairie.



Tall gayfeather.



Tallgrass Legacy Alliance.

Tallgrass Legacy Alliance

The Kansas Partners Program has made the tallgrass prairie one of its top priorities. In April 1999, the Kansas Partners Program initiated an alliance of individuals and organizations called the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance.

The mission of the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance is to preserve, enhance, and restore the tallgrass prairie. This will be accomplished through educational and financial partnerships with private landowners, operators, and private and public entities, in a manner that will strengthen and improve the economic, social, and cultural foundations of the region.

Tom Moxley, rancher and President of the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance says, "*The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners Program is working on the ground for producers and the environment in the State of Kansas.*"

Threats

Kansas historically was ranked fifth in the Nation for acreage of tallgrass prairie, but today Kansas has almost as much tallgrass prairie as all other prairie states combined, excluding Oklahoma. Even so, 82.6% of the Kansas tallgrass prairie has been lost.

Presently, a variety of issues threaten the stability of the region. Some of these are as follows:

- ▶ Invasive species
- ▶ Fragmentation
- ▶ Lack of state and federal incentives to manage prairies in a sustainable manner
- ▶ Decline in agricultural profitability
- ▶ Loss of native plant and animal diversity
- ▶ Lack of public understanding and appreciation of tallgrass prairie

Conservation Strategies

The cornerstone of the Kansas Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is the recognition that in order to save the prairies, we must first keep the ranching community healthy and on the landscape. This premise is facilitated by working through producer organizations such as the Kansas Livestock Association, the Kansas Farm Bureau, and numerous other state, federal, and private partnerships.

The Kansas Partners Program works hand in hand with private landowners to tailor make conservation projects that truly fit the needs of the individual producer and the needs of the environment.

As an example, invasive species control benefits both ranch profitability and biological diversity. The two together generate stability. Assistance with improved grazing strategies can lead to improved profit margin and greatly improved habitat for a large number of prairie species, such as the lesser and greater prairie chicken.

Wetland restorations provide economic opportunities in the form of recreational use and, at the same time, offer tremendous water quality and

trust species benefits for society as a whole. The concept of a “win-win” project design is the definition of success for the Kansas Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.



Wetland restoration in Douglas County.

Partners

Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas State Conservation Commission
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
Kansas Biological Survey
Kansas University
Kansas State University
Kansas State Extension
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts
The Nature Conservancy
Stream and Prairie Research
Wildlife Management Institute
Natural Resource Conservation Service
National Cattleman's Beef Association
American Sport Fishing Association
Quail Unlimited
National Turkey Federation
Texaco
Pittsburg State University
Emporia State University
Haskell Indian Nation Schools
Baker University
Pheasants Forever
Ducks Unlimited
Environmental Protection Agency
USDA - Farm Services Agency
Resource Conservation and Development
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Western Resources



Michigan lily and black-eyed susans.

Accomplishments

The primary accomplishment of the Kansas Partners Program is the development of a state-wide network of partners, sincerely committed to working towards an environmentally sound, fiscally stable, and socially acceptable method of land stewardship within the agricultural heartland of America..

- 700 landowner projects
- 20,000 wetland acres restored
- 40,000 grassland acres restored
- 30 miles of riparian protection
- 3,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest restored
- Numerous environmental education workshops

Future Needs

- Restore 30,000 wetland acres.
- Restore/Enhance 2.5 million acres of native tallgrass prairie.
- Restore/Enhance 1.5 million acres of mid and short grass prairie
- Enhance 500 miles of prairie streams
- New partnerships with 5,000 landowners



Pre-work photo of wetland site.



Finished wetland project.

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